



ENHANCING REGIONAL STABILITY AND SECURITY IN CENTRAL ASIA

Implementing the U.S. Central Command Disaster Preparedness Program

By Professor B.F. Griffard

Upon assuming responsibility for the Central Asian States (CAS) in 2000, the United States Central Command (USCENTCOM) initiated an active theater cooperation program. Employing the National Guard's State Partnership efforts and an innovative U.S. Army War College (USAWC) Center for Strategic Leadership (CSL)-developed environmental security and disaster response initiative, USCENTCOM rapidly established personal and professional relationships throughout the region. Following the September 11, 2001 attack on New York City's World Trade Center, these established relationships expedited the deployment and sustainment of U.S. Forces committed in the initial operations of the Global War on Terror (GWOT). Since then operations in Afghanistan and Iraq have placed the Central Asian States in the forefront of the war on terror. Over that period the USCENTCOM theater cooperation effort has evolved from a mainly environmental security focus to disaster preparedness.

Background

Since inclusion of the CAS in their area of responsibility, the USCENTCOM has teamed with the USAWC Center for Strategic Leadership and the Office of the US Deputy Undersecretary of Defense for Installations and Environment [DUSD (I&E)] in security cooperation efforts to promote regional collaboration for response to natural, accidental, or terrorist induced environmental disasters in the Caspian Basin and the Central Asian States.

In 2001, 2002, and 2003 these efforts took the form of conferences aimed at strengthening the capacity of the Central Asian region to detect, prevent, mitigate, and respond to the consequences of disasters, including those related to terrorism and trafficking of weapons of mass destruction. These events were fora for the exchange of information and the identification of requirements. At the conclusion of the 2003 conference conducted in Almaty, Kazakhstan it was the consensus of the participants that it was time to move from talking to doing. This decision coincided with a refocusing of security cooperation guidance from the Department of Defense.

Disaster Preparedness

As the importance of the CAS to sustainment of the GWOT has grown, the theater security cooperation effort in the region has taken on a new focus. USCENTCOM's CAS Disaster Preparedness Program (DPP) concentrates on activities undertaken in coordination with its South and Central Asian partners for improvement of national and regional capabilities to prevent, prepare for, respond to, and mitigate the effects of natural and man-made disasters. It is inclusive of the consequences of acts of terror, weapons of mass destruction, industrial accidents, and other catastrophes. The DPP vision is to establish a coordinated regional disaster preparedness mechanism to enhance regional stability and security, and improve interoperability to save lives. Success in these areas will deny organizations the ability to influence through terrorism, thus reducing the value and impact of acts of terrorism to terrorists and their sponsors.

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To accomplish this vision, USCENTCOM developed a five year “road map” to assist in the development and enhancement of DP readiness and an effective regional response mechanism. This plan adjusted the scope of the National Guard State Partnership Program (SPP) - International Workshop for Emergency Response (IWER) activities in the CAS, combining them with the disaster response and consequence management efforts previously included in the USCENTCOM/USAWC regional disaster response conferences. The resulting activity-focused workshop concept effectively supports the most current Office of the Secretary of Defense’s (OSD) security cooperation guidance and the GWOT.

International Workshop for Emergency Response 2004

The first workshop derived from this synergy was the CAS Disaster Preparedness Program’s International Workshop for Emergency Response 2004 (IWER 04), conducted September 20-24, 2004 in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. A U.S. National Guard State Partnership event, it was planned and coordinated by the Louisiana National Guard (LANG) and the Republic of Uzbekistan. The USAWC/CSL collaborated on agenda development and provided the U.S. Workshop Moderator. Participating nations included Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, the United States, and Uzbekistan.

IWER 2004 was results-based and focused on demonstrating capabilities rather than just talking about them. In applying this methodology the workshop supported its stated objectives to:

- Enhance disaster preparedness through regional cooperation, information sharing, and mutual aid between the Central Asian States and the United States.
- Assist in the development of competent, motivated, and disciplined emergency management personnel.
- Strengthen the capacity of the Central Asia region to detect, prevent, mitigate, and respond to the consequences of disasters, including those related to terrorism and trafficking of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD).



Welcome Banner at Tashkent Railway Station

Each workshop day looked at a specific area of disaster preparedness competence. During the morning session presenters from the State of Louisiana and the Republic of Uzbekistan would review their existing training, infrastructure and response resources in a specified functional area, setting the stage for Uzbek capability demonstrations in the afternoon.

These capabilities demonstrations included the Uzbekistan National Railroad HAZMAT/Incident Response procedures; Firefighter training and firefighting technology advances; a tour of the Tashkent Emergency Medical Care Center, and an introduction to the recently initiated Uzbek Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear and High-Yield Explosives (CBRNE) Protection Laboratory and a demonstration of the Uzbek Ministry of Emergency Situations search and rescue capabilities.

Uzbekistan National Railroad HAZMAT/Incident Response



Simulated Rail Tanker Car HAZMAT Release with Casualties Uzbekistan National Railway Incident Response Demonstration

The events in Madrid in March 2004 showed that terrorists are looking at national railways as targets, whether industrial or population. Railways move many types of hazardous materials that have legitimate commercial or agricultural uses such as anhydrous ammonia. Improper release of these materials due to acts of nature, man-made accidental or terrorist actions poses a threat to life in the affected areas. To combat such possibilities, both the railroad and government agencies train to contain and clean up such contamination. To demonstrate competencies in this area the Uzbekistan National Railway conducted an incident response exercise that exhibited techniques and procedures for incident evaluation, containment, response (medical and technical), mitigation, and clean-up. Participation included teams and individuals trained in all aspects of incident response and mitigation.

This exercise demonstrated to the Central Asian and U.S. observers that Uzbekistan has both the equipment and trained personnel to address a major HAZMAT release. Processes and procedures reflected knowledge of the most modern methods of incident response. However, the required levels of response are resource intensive and the further away from Tashkent that such an event might occur, the longer it will take for the response professionals and equipment to arrive. Increases in the skill training and certification capability are programmed and available resources targeted for the most probable areas of employment.

Firefighter Training/Technology

Whether brought about through natural causes, the carelessness of man, or an intentional terrorist act, fire is one of the most destructive elements of a disaster. The major component in the effectiveness of the response to an incident is the quality of training received by the committed firefighters. In preparation for the afternoon tour and capabilities demonstration at the Higher Technical School of Fire Safety, the morning session addressed the training requirements, capabilities, and certification procedures for firefighters in Uzbekistan and the State of Louisiana. In addition to observing firefighter training techniques at the Higher Technical School of Fire Safety, workshop members participated in the demonstration of an innovative technology known as the Uzbek fire screen project. This technology allows firefighters to operate in very close proximity to industrial, chemical, and petroleum or forest fires to effectively deliver water or retardants.



Uzbek Fire Screen Technology is demonstrated at the Higher Technical School of Fire Safety

Firefighting is an excellent area for effective security cooperation efforts. It is a field where professionals from all nations speak a common language. It also proved that innovative firefighting technology is where you find it. The Fire Screen works. We were able to operate in an 1100 degrees Fahrenheit environment because of the protection the screen offered.

Incident Response: Emergency Medical Care Facilities

Response to mass casualty situations resulting from natural and man-made disasters, or terrorist incidents, requires an in-place plan, adequate facilities, and trained personnel. When disaster strikes, the effectiveness of the response is dependent upon the government's ability to collect and collate accurate information, and to coordinate the activities of the various agencies involved in the relief effort. This session reviewed both the Uzbek and the USCENCOM planning cycle for medical preparedness for a major disaster in preparation for an afternoon capabilities tour of the Tashkent Emergency Medical Care Center.

The Beslen School Siege in Russia was still fresh in the minds of the participants during the discussion and tour of the Tashkent Emergency Medical Care Center. Housed in an aging facility, the Uzbeks demonstrated a mass casualty-level treatment capability that is replicated on at the regional level throughout the country. Though, it appeared capable of an initial response, a sustained effort beyond the 5-7 day timeframe would require an infusion of outside personnel and resources.

WMD Incident Response and Search & Rescue

In today's environment, the threat of the use of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) is very real. This session reviewed the existing organizations from Uzbekistan and the United States whose mission is to mitigate the damage of a WMD incident through rapid and effective response techniques. This set the stage for a visit to the Uzbek CBRNE Protection Laboratory, and a demonstration of the Uzbek Ministry for Emergency Situations search and rescue capabilities.

The CBRNE Protection Laboratory is in its infancy and not fully operational. The Uzbeks showed it to make sure that the U.S. knew it was serious about taking steps in this direction and needed assistance in properly equipping the facility. The



Uzbek Department of Emergency Services WMD Incident Response Team Demonstration

Uzbek Ministry for Emergency Situations search and rescue team demonstration was especially interesting since it reflected real progress in a capability area that was virtually non-existent when discussed at the inaugural CAS Environmental Security Conference at the George C. Marshall Center, Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany in 2001.

The Way Ahead

Disaster Preparedness is a key pillar of USCENTCOM's Central Asian theater security cooperation effort. Designed to enhance regional stability and security and to significantly reduce the value/impact of acts of terrorism, it provides an excellent vehicle for bilateral and multilateral initiatives. Established in the mid-1990s, the various CAS ministries of emergency situations have come of age and achieved a level of professionalism that now allows them to share information with and among their fellow Central Asian organizations. The openness that exists today reflects great progress and a more focused U.S. effort. The USAWC Center for Strategic Leadership has been a partner with USCENTCOM since the start and continues to assist in this key theater security cooperation program.

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